



# CAPTivations

## Success Stories in Prevention

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### Team Fort Collins (CO)

Team Fort Collins, along with Poudre School District and Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado, were using a national drug abuse prevention program at its three main high schools. However, they believed they could come up with something better.

The result was "Reality Check," a program involving dialog and problem solving which received rave reviews. Team Fort Collins hopes to package it's program and distribute to other districts after the end of the 2002-03 school year, said Jep Enck, outgoing executive director of Team Fort Collins.

"The only results we have so far is how much the kids are enjoying it," Enck observes. "But they're saying, 'It's the best thing we've had,' 'It's about our lives,' 'Thank you, thank you, thank you!'"

Fort Collins, is 70 miles north of Denver, has a population of 120,000, and is home to Colorado State University. The university and school district are the two largest employers. Hewlett Packard, Teledyne Waterpik, Kodak, and Anheuser Busch are additional employers. People want to live in Fort Collins and are willing to take a cut in pay to live there.

Team Fort Collins began in the late 1980s as a project of the local United Way, which, in its role as a community assessor, saw a need to address substance abuse prevention. The coalition was funded by a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant and attracted over 100 members, including businesses, religious organizations, Colorado State University, and the school district.

Now, Team Fort Collins is funded through the U.S. Departments of Justice and Transportation, the Colorado Department of Human Resources, the state Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division, the United Way, and various clubs and organizations.

Jep Enck is excited about the many ways in which the coalition members collaborate with each other to get things done. For example, Coors is a coalition partner, and Enck was able to call on its marketing people when a local bar was using its products in a promotion offering "\$10 all-you-can-drink by halftime specials". Coors

called the bar about the irresponsible advertising, and the promotion ended.

"When Coors calls, that has a more powerful impact than when a little non-profit calls," Enck emphasized.

The "Reality Check" curriculum developed was a committee effort to try to come up with a school-based substance abuse prevention program that would appeal to high school kids, Enck said. They knew that lectures weren't working, and they wanted to come up with an alternative that would be more interesting and would have a greater impact.

One of "Reality Check's" units is on stress. Students talk with each other about what causes stress in their lives, how they can cope with stress, and how turning to alcohol, tobacco, and other substances as a coping mechanism makes the

stress worse in the long run.

The surveys ranked sports participation in the top five stress producers. For the adults, the opposite was the case: sports participation was a stress reliever. Fortunately, one of the coalition partners is in the city parks and recreation department, so the coalition will be asking for 15 minutes with the Little League coaches to explain to them that sports can be a stressor for kids, and can lead to drug use, so the coaches should ease off on the pressure of winning.

Another section of "Reality Check" focuses on a media survey. The students look at magazines geared for adults and teens to see what ads they have for alcohol and cigarettes and how these ads are made to appeal to kids. For example, a typical *Time* or *Newsweek* magazine may have no alcohol or tobacco ads, or maybe just one. But magazines aimed at teenagers might have eight or nine alcohol and tobacco ads, sending the message that in order to be sexy and have great sex, one needs to drink and smoke.

"We just give them the message and say, 'Here you go, what do you think?'" Enck said. "Teens don't want to be hyped, so we show them that they are being hyped. And they don't like it."

The curriculum also includes social norming messages, under the banner, "Everyone's Doing It—Or Are They?" Part of the

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idea is to turn things around to send a positive message; for example, if statistics show 18 percent of kids drink and drive, then that means 82 percent of kids don't drink and drive.

Another section, "You Tell Us," gives the students questions to discuss, without necessarily giving them the "right" answer. Students might break into groups to discuss such topics as whether money for substance abuse should go toward prevention or busting youth who are using.

"Reality Check" also borrows from the best of other prevention programs.

"Flash Judgements" teaches students not to judge people by first impressions. Students watch a video where they see kids' faces and are asked to write down what they think about the kids based on their first impressions. Then, the video gives the real story about the kids. For example, an Hispanic-looking kid with a bandana and a scraggly goatee turns out to be



a school president and honor student whose won numerous community awards.

Another project of Team Fort Collins is Caring and Sharing, a monthly community coalition meeting in which every group which has anything to do with youth meet to network, collaborate and advocate on pertinent issues. A recent project was newspaper three-part series on addiction. The three parts focused on addiction's impact on kids, law enforcement and parents.

The coalition agencies decided to write a letter to the editor, thanking the paper for running the series and suggesting a fourth article be written on resources for prevention. Twenty-three agencies signed the letter, which, Enck notes, had a much bigger impact than if one agency, pushing its own agenda, had sent a letter. The editor was impressed and agreed to

do a fourth article on prevention resources.

"We're all here because we're a community," Enck points out. "Our kids could use more aunts and uncles."

The coalition also worked together through Caring and Sharing when they learned that Big Brothers and Big Sisters wanted to start a chapter in Fort Collins. As it happened, Fort

**"We're all here because we're a community," Enck said. "Our kids could use more aunts and uncles."**

Collins already has a similar program, so the coalition members got together and explained to Big Brothers and Big Sisters that opening a chapter would just be a duplication of services, create unnecessary competition, and dilute resources. The national organization agreed.

Team Fort Collins also sponsors an annual Key Leader Breakfast, which brings together school officials, politicians, and other community leaders to hear reports on substance abuse prevention in Fort Collins and the latest substance abuse statistics from the Colorado Youth Survey. They also receive a listing of all the prevention programs in the area.

Colorado is one of the few states in the nation that requires non-profit board members be 18 or over, and Team Fort Collins would like to see that law changed. This year, the leaders heard from three high school students on Youth Engagement Projects, an effort to get youth on the boards of non-profit agencies.

"We are in violation of that law," Enck said candidly. "We have youth on our board."

Team Fort Collins also has an extensive underage alcohol program, including a Team 21 newsletter that goes to liquor stores, bars, and restaurants, on latest legal changes, programs and information on scanners that are used to see if an ID is false.

Cops in Shops provides funds for police to serve in stores, teaching owners and employees how to check ID's and spot customers who may have had too much to drink.

Team Fort Collins also prints Safe Homes, a list of every home in which parents pledge not to serve alcohol to children and to keep their own alcohol hidden or locked up. The booklet is sent home to schoolchildren, so parents can look up the names of their children's friends, to see if their homes are on the list.

The coalition also sponsors an annual Teen Splashdance for junior high students, which includes a swimming pool, pizza, and a deejay. About 800 kids and 52 volunteers—mostly college students—come to the senior center every year for the event.

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[www.samhsa.gov/centers/csap/csap.html](http://www.samhsa.gov/centers/csap/csap.html)

Decision Support System  
[www.preventiondss.org](http://www.preventiondss.org)

Join Together  
[www.jointogether.org](http://www.jointogether.org)

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America  
[www.cadca.org](http://www.cadca.org)

For this community success story and others from across the Southwest region, visit our website at <http://www.swcapt.org/products/success.html>